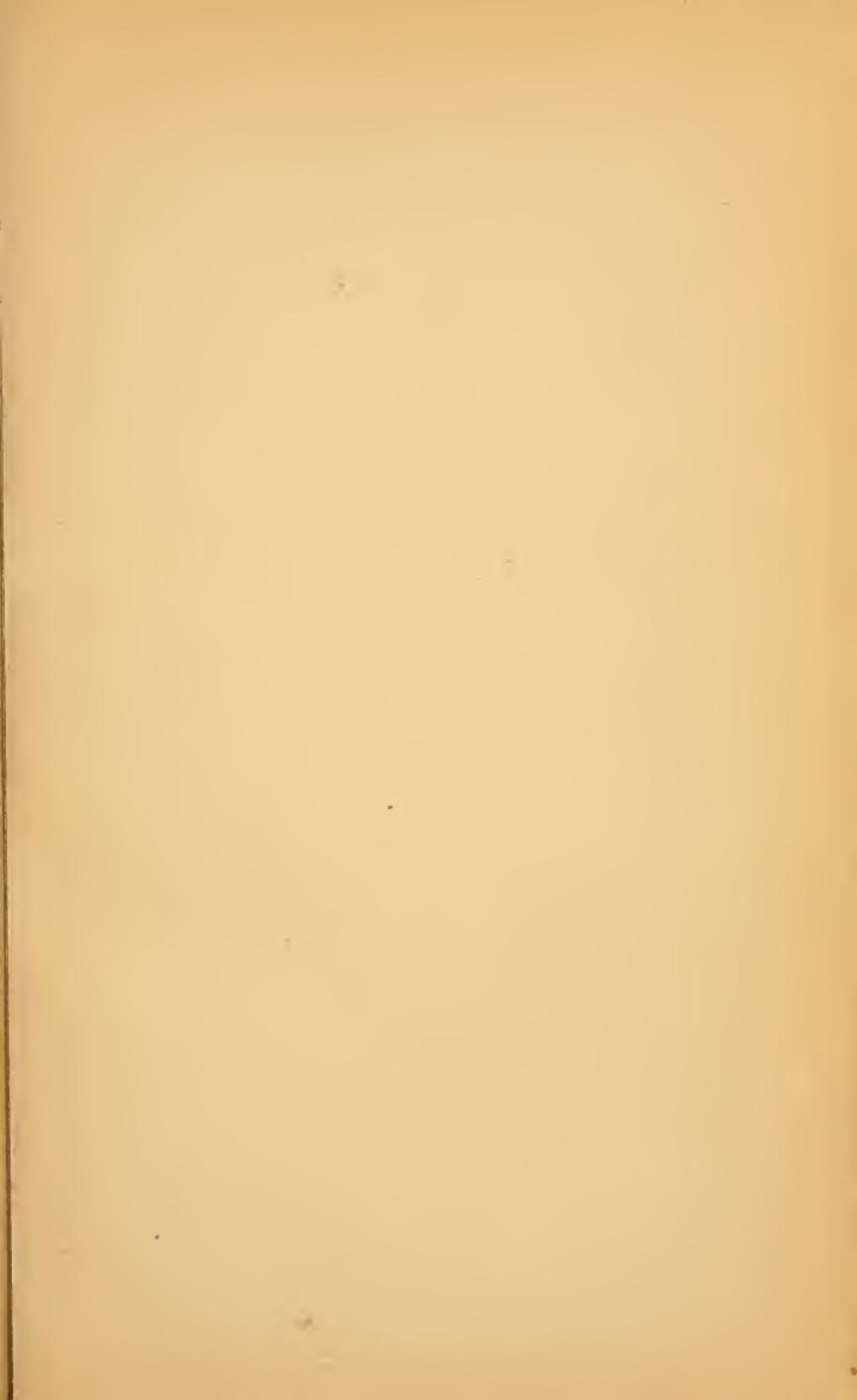


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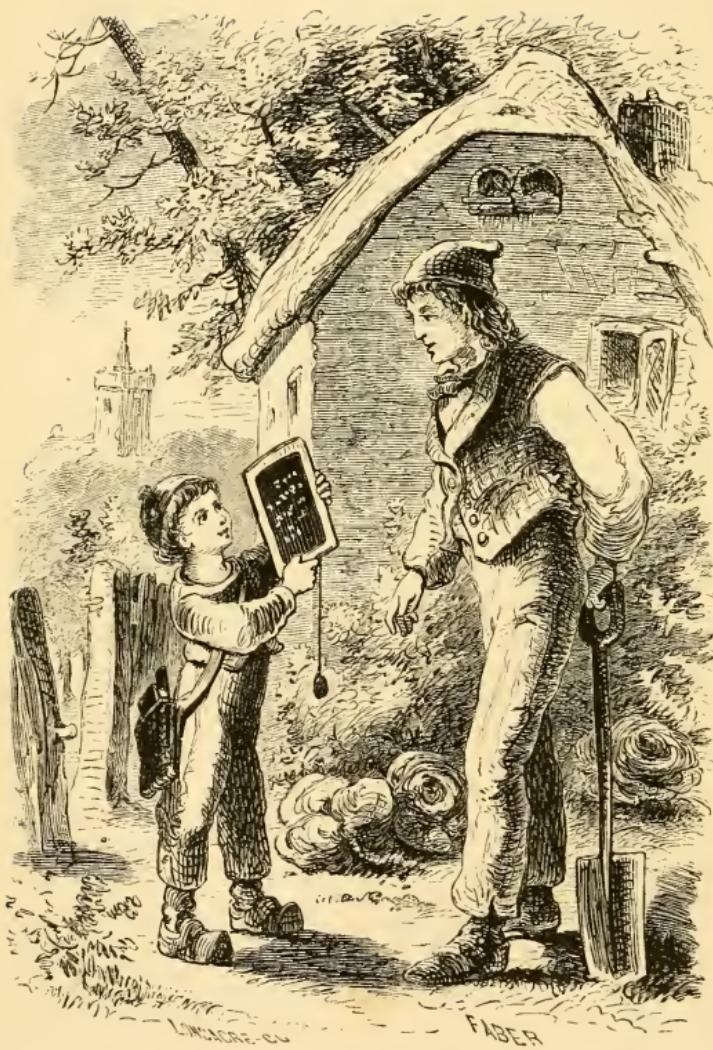
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ILLUSTRATIONS

OF

Scripture Precepts,

FOR THE YOUNG.

Translated from the French

OF Mlle. COURIARD,
(FOR THE S. S. SOCIETY OF PARIS.)

BY
MRS. E. B. STORK.

Second Series.



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THE PEASANT'S SON.





NEW STORIES FOR CHILDREN.

THE PEASANT'S SON.

“Honour thy father and thy mother.” — EXODUS XX. 12.

AT the base of the hill, not far from the little village of —, was the neat and cheerful house of a peasant. He had no stables full of cows, nor poultry-yard, nor barn in which to store his crops. A gar-

den where every spot was carefully cultivated, where vegetables were planted according to their season, a small grape-arbor, a few chickens running around, formed the whole riches of the humble cottager.

And yet, though so retired from the world, you could not have found people happier than they were in that cottage. They were a couple who had once been servants at the castle, which you could see at a little distance. They had married late in life, and were blessed with one son, who was the joy of their hearts.

It was most natural that the

pretty little Germain should make the happiness of his parents, with his interesting and intelligent countenance, with his cheerful and sprightly movements, and his love for work; but above all, in the respect and affection he showed toward his parents. On Sunday, when he went to church, this was the command he loved to hear: "Honour thy father and thy mother." How sweet and easy it was for him to obey! He felt that he could not do enough to show his love to his dear parents, from his overflowing heart.

One day, as he returned from school, he ran up joyfully to his

father, who was spading his cabbages.

“Father! father!” he cried out, “look at this, which I have written myself! My teacher told me there was no fault in all this page, and he gave me a kind tap upon my cheek as a token of his approbation. Read, father, read, I beg you!” And he put under his eyes the famous piece of writing.

The latter hesitated a moment about taking it. Why so? If he could not read, he might make believe; for it is rather humiliating for a father to confess that he knows less than his child. But the good Philip was thoroughly an

honest man; and he judged that to act a lie to his child was more shameful than not knowing how to read; and thus he replied to him with gentle dignity: "My son, I cannot read."

Germain opened his eyes wide. "You do not know how to read, father! how does it happen?"

"In my youth, schools were not so numerous as now-a-days; and then the times were bad."

"Indeed, my dear father! the times were hard! And was that the reason you could not learn to read? Oh, how glad I am that the times are better, and that you are willing

to have me taught to read! Father, father, how good you are!"

Germain threw his arms around the neck of the noble man and embraced him with all his heart. He was so grateful to his father for giving him advantages which he never had himself.

The master of the castle sometimes met his old servant, and stopped to talk with him about his family. On one of these occasions, Philip was very proud to show the writing of his son Germain, which he preserved in his vest-pocket, though he could not read it.

"It is well written, very well

written!" exclaimed M. Villemont: "your son has good abilities."

"You are very kind, sir," said the peasant, taking off his hat, with a gratified look.

"You are happy, my good friend," returned M. Villemont, with a smile; "while I, who have a son about the age of yours, and give him a first-class teacher and every advantage—well, he does nothing; he will not study, and he has no ambition to become a useful man."

"Ah! sir, it is but natural," replied Philip; "your son has no necessity to exert himself, with his name and his fortune."

“But, my friend, of what avail is all this, if he is a fool? But I beg you to bring Germain to see me tomorrow afternoon; I shall be pleased to get better acquainted with him.”

The engagement was made; and it was a beautiful May day when Germain set out with his father to walk through the rows of chestnut-trees which led to the castle. He admired everything he saw — the fine wire lattice which enclosed the grounds, and the green - house where a thousand rare plants grew, and the orange-groves which embalmed the air. “Oh, what a delightful spot! what a beautiful place!” he exclaimed.

As they drew near the house they saw M. Villemont, who came to meet them, and who received them with great kindness. He took them into his parlor, and Germain thought he ought to take off his rough shoes, lest he should damage the bright carpet. After a while he began to examine the rich hangings, the pictures, and the windows which ornamented the hall, and he was surprised to see himself reflected in a mirror whichever way he turned, either to the right or left. At the same time Anatole came in, sword in hand, which greatly amused the little country-boy.

“Show Germain the pictures,” said M. Villemont to him, as he noticed how they interested him.

“Bah!” said Anatole; “Germain would rather play with Meder, and see his tricks.”

He opened the door, and called, “Meder! Meder!” and soon a huge Newfoundland dog leaped in, and laid himself down at the feet of his young master. Germain admired the fine creature, and liked to pet him; while Anatole observed his dog with a look which showed more of self-will than intelligence, and a mouth that seemed accustomed to command.

“These two boys seem made to

live together," said M. Villemont, who was observing them with attention.

"Oh, sir!" said the brave Philip, a little embarrassed, "they are so differently educated."

M. Villemont called Germain, and asked him questions upon his lessons, to which he replied with modesty and much clearness.

"It appears to me you love study more than farming?" he said to him, smiling.

"It is true, sir," answered Germain, a little confused.

"I would not reprove you, my child," said M. Villemont; "every one has his special gift."

Then turning toward Philip :

“ It is easy to see that father and mother are wrapped up in their little son.”

“ Ah, sir, it is not difficult ! ” replied the father, bowing his head.

The affectionate Germain could not bear these words quietly ; he sprang upon the neck of his father, and looking in his face, said to him, gratefully :

“ Yes, father, it is hard ; for you plant, and you sow, and you toil — you know the time for peas and carrots and other vegetables ; but as for me, I don’t know anything about them ! And, then, when I ask the date of the month, you tell

me, 'Little one, it is the 10th, or 12th, or 20th.' Oh, father, you know so much, so many things!"

Germain stopped, almost choked with his earnestness, and his father tenderly pinched his ear.

M. Villemont was quite charmed with him, and telling his son to take him into the garden to play, he turned toward Philip, and began thus:

"My good Philip, I congratulate you. If your son had only fine talents for study, I would not make the proposition of which I now speak; but he has in him such noble sentiments, which I value more than all the rest."

Philip, who knew the heart of his child, looked at M. Villemont with his eyes wet with tears.

“My good friend,” said the latter to him, placing his hand upon the arm of his old servant, “your son has a superior mind, believe me. I am satisfied that it will be well for him to receive better instruction than that he can get at the village school. On my part, I desire to give Anatole a studious companion, who will stimulate him and give him a taste for study. I will be very grateful to you, if you will consent to let Germain become the companion of my son. And if he answers my expectations of

him, I will willingly help him into a good situation, and advance his fortune for life."

However desirable this offer was, Philip hesitated to accept it, so hard would be the struggle to give up his dear child: while he thanked M. Villemont, he asked permission to consult with his wife.

As they walked home, Germain did not cease telling his father all that he had seen and done. He spoke above all of Anatole, who had charmed him. But his father scarcely heard him; so engaged was he with his own thoughts, that his silence seemed strange to the little boy.

As soon as supper was over, Germain kissed his parents good-night, and went to his little bed, and slept soundly. It was then that father Philip told his wife of the proposal of M. Villemont.

“What happiness God sends us!” exclaimed the mother of Germain.

“Do you think so?” said her husband. “I thought it would grieve you to be parted from our little one?”

“Ah, this will be so indeed!” replied Joan, wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron; “but if it is for the good of the child — ”

“Will this really be for his bene-

fit? I am afraid that M. Villemont will make a fine gentleman, who will despise his poor parents who cannot read or write?"

"Have you such an opinion of our child?" said the mother, almost angry. "Ah, I know him better than you do! From his earliest years, he has honored his father and his mother; and I am sure his heart will not change."

"Well, since it is your advice, I will take him over after to-morrow to M. Villemont."

When they had agreed upon it, the poor Joan did not feel so happy. How could she get used to live without her Germain? no more to

have him return so happy from his school? not to hear him sing, whistle, or enliven the house with his cheerfulness? She did not see how she could get through the day without him.

When they told Germain of these plans of M. Villemont for him, he jumped for joy, which rather pained his mother.

“Don’t rejoice too much beforehand, my boy,” said she; “you must not expect it will be all pleasure.”

“Oh, mother! I know that very well; but in this way I can soon become rich, and then I will buy a large farm for father, and vineyards,

and meadows, and cows; and then, mother, you shall have a servant, and you shall rest. And how happy you will be!"

"All this is good and desirable, my Germain. But, in expecting this, we shall be separated a long time."

And then poor Joan, whose heart was full, burst into tears.

The little boy became very sad at the sight of her grief.

"Mother, why then will you send me away from you, if it makes you sorry?" said he.

"It is for your good, my little one."

"Oh, I don't care for this good!"

I would four times rather see you satisfied."

"And all your fine plans of fortune," said his mother to him, with a smile; "have you forgotten them?"

Germain thought a moment.

"It is true, mother—I had forgotten them; but I tell you that I would much rather see you happy."

"Dear child! father and mother have decided that we will part with our Germain, since it is for his future happiness. Be happy, then, without another thought; for if you behave well, and if you continue to honor your parents, we can desire no more; and God will bless you

and preserve you from evil, my son!"

Some days afterward, Germain found himself installed at the castle, and presented to Anatole's teacher.

Lessons began, and Germain by zeal and application soon overtook his fellow-student. He had an ability for the natural sciences, botany, and chemistry, which surprised the professor, and as he was himself well acquainted with these different sciences, he took pleasure in advancing his pupil.

He was no longer the little country-boy, with fustian vest and rustic manners; Germain had quick-

ly caught the forms and ceremonies of his new home, and he was at no disadvantage with Anatole, either at the table of his protectors, or in the parlor, when the friends of M. Villemont asked to see the two boys. But what did not change was his heart: it was still in the right place. On Sundays, he saw his parents, and almost ran to the cottage, where Philip and his wife impatiently waited for him.

When he was with these good parents, he loaded them with caresses, and then listened to their advice with an attention and respect which, far from diminishing, were more profound than ever.

And on his return to the castle, he entertained his friends with what his father had told him, and the injunctions of his mother.

One day, when several young lads had come from the village to see them, as they often came, the professor proposed a walk into the country ; the joyous band started, running over the meadows, exploring the woods, and fording the little creek which wound along the road.

At a turn of the road, they saw, not far from them, a man walking with difficulty, as he carried a basket of herbs upon his back. At sight of him Germain uttered a

cry, sprang forward, and was soon folded in the arms of the villager. Anatole's friends were surprised at this little scene, for they did not know that this Germain, whom they treated as a companion, was the son of a peasant.

As to him, he walked by the side of Philip, looking so happy that his friends did not know what to make of him. The teacher, who was walking a few steps behind the young people, stopped the good peasant, and spoke to him of Germain in such high terms, that the poor father's eyes filled with grateful tears.

As soon as they had parted,

“Who is this man of whom you are so fond?” they asked on all sides around Germain.

The latter raised his head with a happy and proud look: “It is my father!” he said.

His tone and his manner were so expressive that no one dared to make a remark, nor even to utter one exclamation of surprise. And Germain lost nothing in the esteem of his young friends.

As years passed on, the time came for the two young men to choose a profession. Anatole, whose character was rather violent and fond of command, decided to become a soldier; saying, he would

soon be a general. As for Germain, he had certain wishes in his mind, but he did not dare to confess them — they seemed too ambitious for him. At last, being pressed by his kind protector, he said his earnest wish was to become a physician.

“ Well, my dear friend,” said M. Villemont to him, “ I will be delighted to help you follow a profession which you love, for your example has had a good influence over my son: from the day that he had you to stimulate him, his love for study developed, and he worked diligently in your company. It is then but just that I should show my satisfaction. If your parents

consent, you shall enter the Medical College of Paris."

Germain could not believe in such happiness ; but when he was with his parents, he gave himself up to the expression of his joy.

Father Philip and his wife took good care not to oppose the wishes of their son ; and in a month after, Germain was on the road to Paris.

We will not follow him during these years of study : we shall only say that he left the medical college in the most honorable manner, and a short time after, his name was that of a distinguished doctor. But in spite of the attractions of the city of Paris, his heart still re-

turned to his native place. He knew that his parents would not consent to leave their country home to live in Paris, and he wished to be near those dear ones, to surround them with comfort, and to cherish them with affection.

He returned and settled himself permanently in the little village of —, and was married a short time after to a young girl, modest and intelligent, and well reared

To-day, Germain is the happiest husband, and the most celebrated physician. Encouraged and sought after by the first families in the country, he gives in turn charming entertainments and dinners, where

it is an honor to have a seat. But the most honorable place is always kept for two old people, a man and his wife, whose modest dignity is made more striking by their rustic dress. Perhaps they would rather not attend these fashionable dinners in the presence of people who are mostly strangers to them; but they know they would disappoint their son if they were not present at all the feasts that he gives. Then they are so happy to see him admired and esteemed; so honored to receive congratulations on the merit of their son; so happy in the regard they feel for their lovely daughter, who loves and respects

them as much as her husband could desire, and who welcomes them in her handsome parlors, to which they have been so little accustomed. But what delighted them most was to have the frequent visits of their son. It is then they experience the comfort of the respectful affection of which they are the object.

Enjoying every blessing, and tenderly watched over by their child in their old age, they thanked God from the bottom of their hearts for having given them such a son, and repeated often to him, with tearful eyes: "My son, teach your children to keep this com-

mandment, 'Honour thy father and thy mother,' that in your old age you may be as happy as we are."





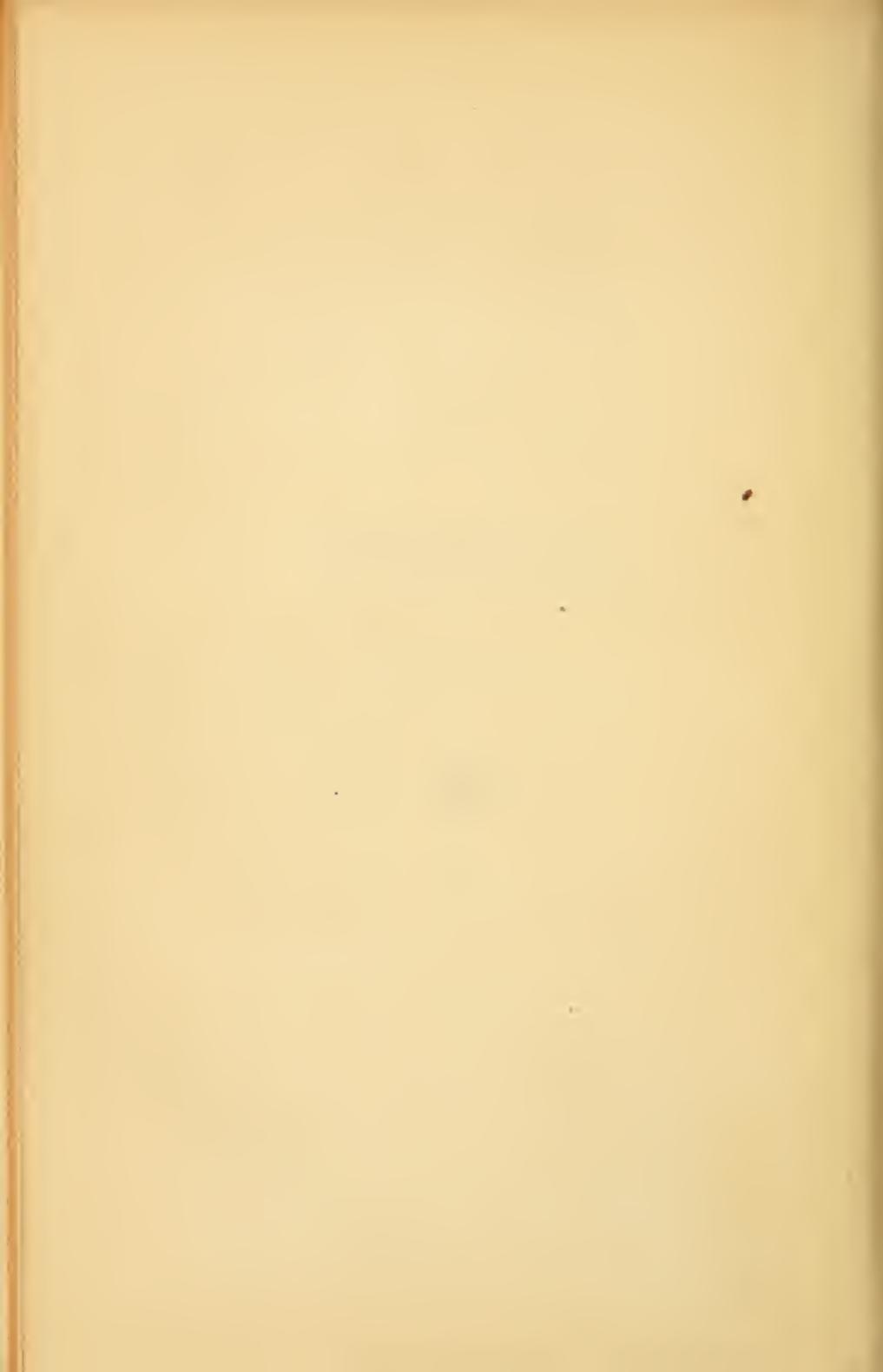


CELINE.



4 *

41





CELINE.

“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” — PHILIPPIANS ii. 4.

CELINE was a little girl, who was always good, when she was not crossed and could have her own way; but no sooner did they contradict her, or require the slightest favor, than she became gloomy and morose.

“Celine,” her little sister of six years old would sometimes say to her, “won’t you please come and play doll with me?”

“Hush! I am reading in my story-book,” Celine would reply, without looking up. And if her mother obliged her to yield to the wishes of her sister, she would rise up in a pet, and noisily push back her chair, and close her book roughly. If she played with her little friends, they must always choose the play she preferred; and if any one else had a choice, Celine would give up playing.

“My dear,” her mother would often say to her, “you will never be loved, so long as you seek to have your own way, and your own advantage.”

“Look at Rosine, who is only six

years old, how she tries to make every one happy, and how readily she gives up to others!" Indeed, the little Rosine, though she was three or four years younger than her sister, was more amiable and obliging. She loved above all things to give pleasure, and was never so happy as when she saw others pleased. They had each a little garden to themselves. Celine cultivated fruit in hers; but it never came into her mind to offer a gooseberry from her bush, or a strawberry from her border; while Rosine was always cutting off flowers, "to make bouquets for mamma," as she said. You would

see her running with all her might to bring her gift to her mother, though, unfortunately, she cut the stems too short.

“How happy I am!” she exclaimed, one day; “Perrette is coming!”

Perrette was foster-sister to Celine. She was a sweet little peasant-girl, who came sometimes to spend the afternoon at Madame Valbois', and who enjoyed playing with the two little girls. But Celine had other plans for the day. Her mother had allowed her to visit one of her friends, and the news of the arrival of Perrette had disconcerted her so much

that she became morose and ill-humored.

Rosine became grave.

“Why are you so annoyed?”

“For this reason—that I cannot go now to see Louise.”

“And I was so pleased! However, since you are so disappointed, I would rather she would not come.”

Thus it was that this good little girl, always preferred the pleasure of others to her own.

Meanwhile Celine consoled herself, as Perrette was so docile and agreeable, that she could do as she pleased with her foster-sister. So that she ruled over her like a

queen, without any regard to her likes or dislikes. She pretended she was a queen, and seating herself upon the trunk of a tree, she told Rosine and Perrette that they were her subjects, and must obey all her commands.

Rosine was to gather yellow flowers to ornament her throne, and Perrette was to bring a willow-branch for her sceptre. But, as the branch was high, Perrette had some trouble in reaching it: she had a hard fall, and hurt her hands. But Celine showed her no pity, content to have her own will gratified. The play ended by a call to tea, and they seated themselves under

an arbor, where a nice repast awaited them.

“Mamma,” said Celine, whose bright face began to cloud, “you promised that we should have honey for supper!”

“It is true, my dear,” replied Madame Valbois; “but as it makes Rosine sick, I have given you preserves in its place.”

“But I love honey,” replied Celine, in a cross tone.

“You will enjoy in its stead these stewed apricots.”

Celine could not be persuaded to touch the stewed fruit, because she had fixed her mind upon honey. What if it did make her

sister sick? that was nothing to her, so long as *she* was suited.

“Where are the raspberries which Perrette brought?” said she, in a few moments; “are we to have them?”

“My children,” said Madame Valbois, “I have reserved them for another purpose; I have sent them to our poor, sick neighbor, whose only relief is to eat fresh fruit.”

“That is right, mamma,” said little Rosine, clapping her hands: but Celine rudely pushed back her stool, and wept for disappointment.

“Oh, my daughter!” said her mother, “I would not have believed you to be so selfish about them!

What! can you not deny yourself for a poor sick person?"

Celine still wept. Then her little sister arose and went to her, and whispered: "James promised to give me a nice peach: I will give it to you."

Madame Valbois, charmed with the kind heart of Rosine, tenderly embraced her, and sent away the three children to walk in the country, under the care of a maid.

"Where shall we go?" they asked, upon setting out.

"Upon the hill! upon the hill!" said Rosine and Perrette, with one voice.

"Oh, no! not to the hill," said

Celine; "it is disagreeable to mount. Let us go in the meadows and find wild flowers."

As usual, Celine had her own way, and they went toward the field, where a flock of sheep were grazing.

"They are eating up the red flowers," said Celine, in displeasure. "Let us make haste to gather those that are left."

The three little girls went to work and gathered the beautiful flowers, until they had a large bouquet.

"Where did you find so many?" said Celine; "I have only found six."

And in her vexation, she gave a

blow of her parasol to a ram, who was cropping the grass where some bright flowers were blooming. The animal, taken unawares, turned suddenly and ran against the little girl trembling with fear, and striking his head against her, threw her on the ground; then being enraged, he was about attacking her again, when her father, warned by the cries of the nurse, ran and seized him by the horns from behind, and gave the imprudent child time to escape from the danger she was in.

Celine was sick for several days, as much from her fright as from the fall she had; but she did not reflect deeply upon the cause of the acci-

dent; she did not see that her own wayward temper had drawn her into this, and she did not repent of preferring her pleasure to that of others.

This warning, which God had sent her, she did not heed.

Some months after, a great treat was in store for Celine. Her father had promised to take her with him on an excursion up the mountains; she anticipated great pleasure, and was dreading every moment lest any obstacle should arise to prevent their departure.

Her mother, observing her uneasiness, said to her: "God may require you, my child, to give up

this journey, and He will expect you to submit cheerfully. If He gives you this pleasure, enjoy it gratefully; be careful of your father, and seek his convenience rather than your own personal gratification."

But Celine paid no attention to this counsel; besides, she did not like to be called to self-sacrifice, and she said to herself "that if she was disappointed in this journey, they never could console her."

At last, the long-looked-for day arrived. The sun rose brightly, and Celine impatiently watched the preparations for their departure. But just at the moment of their

setting out, the sky was overcast, and her father announced that the barometer had fallen. "Shall we wait until to-morrow, Celine?" said M. Valbois, in a cheerful voice.

"Oh, papa!—" said Celine, at once in a fret.

"When it is necessary, daughter," observed her mother.

"But it is impossible," she said. "I have been anticipating it such a long time!" She turned away with a pout.

"How very unseemly your behavior, at a time you expect to set out on a journey," said her mother, reproving her severely. "I hope you may not meet with punishment,

my child, for thus obstinately seeking your own gratification."

Notwithstanding there were signs of rain, Celine urged her father so strongly, that as he was perhaps rather too indulgent, he set off with her on the route.

The weather was inclement, and a storm burst upon them as they reached the hotel. Celine was greatly disappointed, but she dared not complain, as she had only herself to blame. At last, after it had rained all day, the sun shone again, and the travellers continued on their way. We need not speak of the delight and entertainment of Celine, who was inclined to be

most amiable, since her father had yielded to all her wishes.

One day it was decided that, immediately after dinner, they should take an open coach and ride out to a Swiss cottage to get their supper. The prospect was delightful. Unfortunately, M. Valbois suffered from headache, and told his daughter he would rather defer the party until the next day. But the selfish Celine, so far from following the admonition of her mother, began to complain and fret.

“The air will do you good, papa.”

“I do not think so,” replied M.

Valbois ; “ I fear, on the contrary, it will increase the pain.”

“ And the coach which is ordered, and which will be sent ! — ”

“ We can direct the coachman to return to-morrow.”

“ Oh, to-morrow ! always to-morrow ! To-morrow something else will prevent, and we shall not get there.”

“ Come ! ” said M. Valbois ; “ I perceive that I must yield to you, if I would not have the whole day fretted away with your complaints.”

Celine was victorious, and impatiently awaited the coach, which soon appeared.

“Your horse looks vicious,” said M. Valbois to the driver.

“In truth, he is rather wild,” replied the latter; “but I could get no other to-day.”

“If this is the case, we shall defer the excursion.”

“Oh, papa! it is too annoying to be always putting off, and never being sure of anything!” exclaimed Celine, almost in tears.

“Get in, sir,” said the driver, at the same time smiling at the impatience of the little girl; “we shall get along safely.”

Celine stepped into the coach, her father placed himself by her side, and away they rode. But

suddenly, in a turn of the road, they found themselves behind a hay-wagon, which they were obliged to follow for some time in a walk. The coachman had great trouble in restraining his horse, who wanted to pass the hay-wagon, and capered with impatience.

“Ho, ho, Perroquet!” said the driver; “gently, gently!”

But the animal, too restive for his master, right or wrong rushed past the hay-wagon, and overturned the coach into a ditch.

Celine, stunned by the shock, fainted. Her father flew to her, though bruised in his shoulder,

and entreated her to open her eyes and speak to him.

At last, after many efforts, she recovered ; but it was with weeping and moaning :

“Oh, my arm ! my arm !”

M. Valbois feared that her arm was broken, and begged the driver to hasten and bring a settee, to carry her to the hotel. It soon arrived, and Celine was placed on it ; but the least motion caused her cruel suffering. On reaching the hotel, they hastened to put her to bed, and to send for a surgeon, who, after having examined her arm, said it was fractured in two places. This was a severe trial for the little

girl, to find herself confined to her bed, far from her home, and for tedious weeks. Then, besides this, her wounds caused fever, and Celine passed nights in delirium, not recognizing any one.

At last the fever was subdued, and how happy was the little invalid, upon coming to herself, to see her mother, who had been sent for immediately, seated beside her couch.

But a moment's consideration caused her bitter tears.

“Mamma,” said she, “do you think this came from my fault? Do you think that because I followed my own will, I am lying here very sick? If I had listened

to papa—if I had felt for his sick head, this would not have happened to me."

The poor child wept so much, that her mother, embracing her, said: "Be comforted, my daughter. God has sent this accident to correct you, and to lead you to reflection and confession of sin."

Celine had leisure to consider her faults while she lay in bed, and she seriously resolved to watch over herself, and to conquer her selfishness and bad temper.

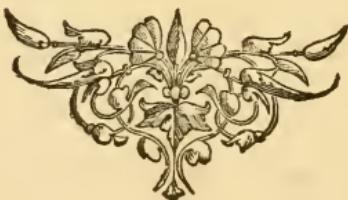
It was three weeks after the accident before she could return home, without having accomplished the journey she had so long desired;

and a still longer time elapsed ere she could fully recover the use of her arm.

Celine had a severe conflict in reforming her character ; but when she inclined to her former despotism, her mother had only to touch her arm lightly: she knew what this meant—"God has warned you not to seek to please yourself." And she at once gave up her will to others, and recovered her good humor.

When Celine was fully reformed, when she was as considerate and amiable as her little sister, she confessed to her mother that this was well worth a broken arm, and that

she would be thankful to God, through her whole life, for correcting her, even though it should happen again.

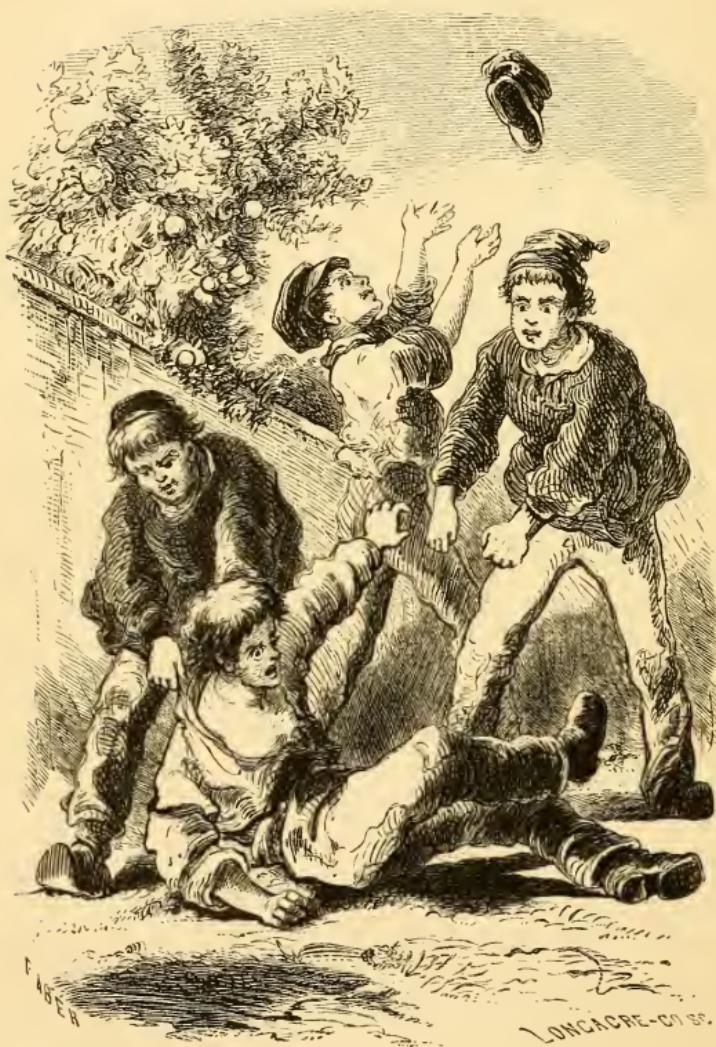




JEROME.









J E R O M E.

“ Servants, obey in all things your masters.”—
COLOSSIANS iii. 22.

GET out, you little rogues!” said an old gentleman to some ragged children, who were prowling round his garden. “ I know you; it is you who came yesterday, and climbed up the wall to get my nuts. I tell you, get out!”

At these words, the little beggars were variously affected. Some looked at him with a mocking, sul-

len air, and others with insolence, and oaths: one only felt himself blush to the eyes, in hearing himself accused of theft; but this was not a guilty blush—it arose from outraged honesty. His open, frank face was a true witness to his uprightness. One could see that this face, with its candid look, had no need to turn away with confusion when theft and robbers were mentioned. Sorrowfully and silently he followed his companions, who, when they were far enough away so as not to be heard, or at least to shield themselves from punishment, exclaimed against the

meanness of the old gentleman, who watched his trees :

“ We must revenge ourselves ! ” suddenly said one, who appeared to be the worst of the band.

“ Yes, yes ; let us revenge ourselves upon this old miser , ” replied another ; “ this can easily be done . ”

“ We ’ll pay him up for this ! ” cried out a third.

“ Let us swear to revenge ourselves ! ” screamed out his neighbor, raising an arm, with its torn sleeve.

“ I ask nothing better ; but how shall we do it ? ” objected one of them.

“ It will be very easy , ” replied the first : “ there is a bench behind

the wall — from this bench I can spring to the branches above; once upon the wall, I can slide on the hazel-tree; and when I reach a nut, I will let it fall. Only it must be well understood that the others are to watch!"

"On condition of having our share."

"It is fixed! you must promise to be here this evening at eight o'clock."

"I will not promise!" said the little boy with the honest face.

"You will bite your fingers then, I forewarn you!"

"I will not promise — I will not steal!"

“What a coward you are! Since we are called thieves, we may as well steal.”

“I will not steal!”

“You will repent of this. You know I can bring tears with a blow of this fist?”

“If you give it to me, you will be none the better for it.”

“Well, we shall see!”

Whereupon the little wretches separated, after fixing upon a place to meet in the evening; and Jerome went away, troubled about what they might do to him if he did not join them, and yet quite determined not to commit sin. The next day he tried to keep out of

the way of these comrades, hoping at first that they would not succeed in their bad plans, and then that they would forget to punish him for his refusal.

But, alas! one morning, as he was strolling beyond the village, a voice cried: "You shall not escape this time!"

At the same time he received a severe blow of a fist on the back. He had no time to return it, when he saw himself surrounded by four or five bad fellows, who set themselves to work to make him pay dear for his cowardice, as they called it.

One dragged him by his sleeve,

which he tore entirely off; another threw his cap into the air, while a third threw him down.

Poor Jerome, when once down, made useless efforts to get up again, for the little scamps kept him in this position by their superior force.

The poor boy burst into tears, and cried out for help. At this moment a gentleman was passing in a wagon, who stopped his horse upon hearing the screams, to know what was the matter.

But at the sight of a great and strong man getting out of his wagon, the comrades of Jerome fled, instead of replying. The

gentleman came up to the little boy, and found him in such a sad state that he was moved with pity ; and with whip in hand, he ran after the little rogues, who, greatly terrified, took to their heels. Then, returning to his protégé, he raised him up, and asked him kindly the meaning of this scene.

“They were revenging themselves on me, because I would not help them to steal,” said Jerome, who was so bruised that the tears almost prevented his speaking.

“Is it possible?” exclaimed the gentleman. “My child, do you tell the truth? You know God

hears all we say, and we cannot deceive Him."

"Oh! the good God well knows that I speak the truth," replied Jerome, raising upon his questioner a look so sincere, that the latter, convinced of the truth of the little fellow, replied:

"Poor child, come with me! We will try to rescue you from this miserable life."

He led Jerome to his wagon, seated him beside himself, and whipped up his beautiful gray horse, who set off on a trot. In about five minutes he stopped his wagon before a farm-house in the midst of a large garden; at the

sight of which, Jerome gave a start of surprise, for at the very same door where he now was, an old gentleman had sent him away with his comrades, in the most mortifying manner. His companion told him to come out, as he opened the door by touching a secret spring; he then called the gardener to take his horse, and he led the way to the house.

“Where shall I find my father?” he asked of the servant, who came to meet him.

“In the dining-room, where he is reading his newspaper.”

“Good! Will my good Margaret give to this young lad a cup

of milk and a crust of bread? and after a while I will tell you his story."

While his kind preserver went into the other room, Jerome followed Margaret into the kitchen, and was much refreshed by the care of this good woman. Ten minutes after, a door opened, and a voice, that he knew as that of his new friend, called him. He ran, and upon a friendly signal entered the dining-room, where sat an old gentleman in his dressing-gown, with his spectacles over his nose, who began to examine him so earnestly that poor Jerome trembled. But he was not recognized

as one of the beggars whom the owner of the house had driven away two or three days before; while the very first glance of his eye had been enough to satisfy him that the father of his protector, and the old gentleman, were one and the same person.

“Where do you come from, my lad?” asked the latter, in a few moments.

“I come—I come from the place—”

“What place?”

With a motion of his head, Jerome pointed to the place he meant.

“And what do you do there?”

“I beg.”

“Bad business! Do your parents approve of it?”

Jerome looked at the questioner, astonished.

“I have no parents,” he said.

“Who then takes care of you?”

“I belong to the village.”

“Do you mean the alms-house?”

“Yes, sir, I believe.”

“Have you a taste for idleness and begging, that you do not try to earn an honest living?”

“I love to work, but no one employs me.”

“We ought to take the trouble to find work, if we are in earnest. But if you are sincere in this de-

sire, I will make a proposal to you: you shall weed the court and the garden, and you will help the gardener to water it; and in return, you shall be fed and lodged: they will make you a bed upon the straw, and you will receive ten cents a day, so that you will soon be able to get better clothes."

Jerome was flushed with happiness, and, if he dared, he would have begun skipping about the room.

"Do you like this plan?" asked the son of the old gentleman, smiling.

Jerome answered with a look

which was a true witness of his content and gratitude.

“Can I begin now?” said he, in a joyful voice.

The old gentleman seemed pleased with his eagerness, and led him to the gardener, telling him to give a knife to Jerome.

We now see this little boy installed in his new quarters, and having the good-will of Catharine by his industry and obedience. But what was still better—which God alone saw—was his fidelity in little and secret things.

He was often left by himself for several hours: he weeded out the strawberry-beds, or the roots of

the trees loaded with tempting apricots; and the trusty boy never thought of even taking one of them: neither red, luscious strawberries — enough to make one's mouth water — nor golden apricots, nor mulberries, hanging within his reach. No; this command of the Lord Jesus, "Be faithful in all things," was so clearly written upon his conscience, that the little Jerome would not stifle her voice.

Sometimes his master watched him from the window, without his seeing him, and every day he found him more worthy of trust and confidence. Every time he saw his son he spoke of him with

a new interest, and one day he said to him:

“This boy is capable of something better than weeding and watering the garden. He deserves that we advance him in some profession in which he can succeed.”

“I will take care of him,” said M. Pollux. “If you are willing, father, I will take him home with me; I will take him for my little waiter. In the mornings he will clean shoes, carry water, and scour knives; in the afternoon he shall go to school, and I will give him a small salary.”

“Very well, my son. This will be a good deed, to put him in

some way of gaining an honest living."

This proposal was made to Jerome, who was very glad to be advanced, although he regretted the fine garden, where the air was so pure, so balmy, and the gardener, who had showed him so much kindness, and even his old master, whose occasional smile of approval was in Jerome's eyes a very great honor. On the other hand, the prospect of learning new things, of earning his bread, and being independent, made his heart leap with joy.

But every position in life has its temptations, and Jerome, although he had not to resist the desire to

eat the fruits of the garden, lived among servants less faithful, who were in the habit of pilfering. There was a lump of sugar he might take from the sugar-bowl, as he carried it into his master's chamber, and which would be so nice in his milk;—or it was the remains of a bottle of wine, which M. Pollux believed to be emptied;—a cent, a single cent, forgotten upon the parlor mantelpiece: no one knew to whom it belonged; and then who would think of inquiring after a cent?

But Jerome was firm; he would be faithful in all things. His conscience told him: “If these things

are of no value, why steal them, instead of simply asking for them? And if they are of value, how sinful to touch them!" His resistance did not make his life very comfortable. The servants, who were often afraid of him when they would satisfy their covetousness, punished him by sharp and ugly words and treatment. But he persisted in his resolution; and besides, his kind and obliging ways were not without their influence upon those among whom he lived. As to M. Pollux, he was delighted with his little Jerome; he interested himself in the progress he made at school, and he promised that if he

continued as he had commenced, he would place him with a merchant.

So that, one fine day, Jerome found himself in a warehouse filled with customers, replying politely to those who wished to see the goods, and anxious to please them; so that he gained the good will of all by his obliging and prompt attention. And yet he was sorry that his new position had removed him so far from his dear M. Pollux. He soon became acquainted with the young clerks in the same warehouse, and these amused themselves in laughing at his old-fashioned and mended

clothes, and his well-worn cap, whose color had turned to a grayish yellow.

The merchant often sent one of these clerks to carry orders to the village, and Jerome was sometimes sent upon these errands. It often happened that on these occasions he met an old comrade, who had once been employed by M. Pollux as messenger. He was still at this work, but not very successful, as he lost so much time in loitering and idleness.

“Come,” said he to Jerome, one day, stopping him on his way; “I have done my work for to-day, and have nothing more to do: come

with me; let us take a walk through the village."

"No, indeed!" said Jerome. "My master expects me to return soon."

"You have time; it is not four o'clock yet."

"No matter: what would I do if we were delayed?"

"Why, what is one hour? If he scolds you for such a trifle, he is a tyrant. Well, then, go with me for a half-hour. You will not refuse to walk with me one half-hour?"

"It is true, I tell you. I cannot give you even a quarter of an hour, since my time does not belong to me."

“What is it you are telling me?”

“It is a fact. My master pays me for a day’s work; if, then, I use for my own pleasure a part of this day, it is so much I have stolen from him. Let me go: I have trifled too long already.”

“Go—you are an original curiosity! You are as wise as a judge.”

But Jerome did not hear: he was already far off; for he would as little steal time as money, and rigidly kept this precept: “Be faithful in all things.”

“Good news for Jerome!” cried out one of the clerks to him one day. “But to understand its im-

portance, allow me first to present his cap to you."

And the malicious boy showed the famous cap to them, which they received with shouts of laughter.

"Jerome, my lad," continued he, turning toward the young man, who was arranging a pile of goods to conceal his embarrassment—for he was aware of the shabbiness of this part of his dress—"Jerome, great bargains of caps and hats of all kinds, in the market-house. Extraordinarily low price—excellent goods. This is on the bill: I thought of you at once—was not this amiable in me?"

Jerome said nothing; but he

sighed once or twice, and his countenance grew serious. In the evening, he took his humble cap and went out with his comrades. The one who had ridiculed him drew his arm within his own, and said to him :

“Come, let us see the sale in the market-place !”

Jerome allowed himself to be led before a grand display of head-gear of all kinds—straw hats, and fur caps, of all colors, and of all prices.

Jerome was charmed, and the temptation seemed too great for him.

“Here,” said his companion to

him, "this was surely made for you?"

And taking off his yellow-gray cap, he tried on him one of pretty blue cloth.

"Now, what can you say to this? What is the price?" he asked of the merchant.

"Thirty cents, my good sir."

The clerk nudged Jerome's arm, whispering:

"It is cheap, really cheap! buy it."

Jerome held the object of his desire in his hand, pleased with its beauty and fitness. But suddenly he laid it down, turning away his eyes, and said, in a sorrowful tone:

“I have no money.”

“Ask your patron for an advance.”

“He never pays beforehand; least of all when the case is not urgent, and in this matter he would laugh at me.”

“When are your month’s wages due?”

“In fifteen days.”

“And the sale will be over in eight!”

Jerome looked at his friend in perplexity.

“An expedient!” said the latter to him. “Keep the money of the first goods which you sell, and you can return the sum in fifteen days.”

Jerome was startled, and drew back.

“In all my life I never did such a thing!”

“Simpleton! Is this common stealing, when you intend to replace every cent of it?”

“It is the same. I feel within me that this would be sin. Say no more about it, I beg you. After all, what matters it to me whether my cap is pretty or ugly?”

In saying these words, he quickly left the place of temptation, without casting a single glance back. He was more thoughtful than usual that evening, casting a sad look, as he laid down to sleep, upon his old

yellow cap, that had been so serviceable to him, and he dreamed of hundreds of caps of beautiful blue cloth, which they would neither give nor sell to him. But the next day, when he saw his master's confiding look, and heard him speak so kindly to him, he felt so happy within, that, while swinging his cap in his hand, he looked at it with an air which said:

“How I do love ~~you~~ you, you dear old friend! I would sooner lose a hundred new caps than part with you: be easy about it!”

Worn as it was, the noble Jerome managed to wear it for six months longer. But ten years

afterward, the little beggar of the village alms-house was in business with the son of his master, at the head of one of the first commercial houses of the village. Happy in abundance, enjoying the esteem and confidence of all around him, he had the consciousness of being above suspicion or dishonor.

His chief joy was not in his prosperity, his easy life, the affection and respect he received; no, it was in having been from his earliest years faithful in all things.





MICHAEL'S KNIFE.



9*

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MICHAEL'S KNIFE.

“Love one another.” — JOHN xiii. 34.

IT was Fair Day in the little village of Saint —. The tradesmen were kept busy, being surrounded by numerous customers; men were buying cravats, and vests, and pocket-handkerchiefs of lively colors; women were supplying themselves with baskets and bonnets; children were carrying off in triumph two-cent trumpets, through which they were blowing with all their

might. Farther off were horses, and oxen, and sheep, enclosed in a large field, awaiting purchasers, who came to examine them, and to lead them away to new masters.

Before a display of cutlery, a little chimney-sweep stood turning a piece of money between his hands, looking with eager desire upon the strong-handled knives with their glittering blades. An old gentleman, struck with his honest and intelligent countenance, became interested in him ; and the boy was not a little startled to hear himself addressed by a friendly voice.

“ You appear to me to have a

strong wish for one of those knives, my young friend?" said the old man to him.

The chimney-sweep cast down his eyes, without speaking.

"You have money in your hand: why do you not buy one?"

"I have but two cents," said Michael, much embarrassed, "and it costs six."

"Well," said the good gentleman, "I will give you what is lacking: select the one which you like best."

The little sweep, well pleased, chose his knife with care, and gave his two cents, to which his new friend added four.

“Did you examine this knife?” said the gentleman. “See this fine blade, sharp and strong; and then it has a device besides! Read the motto engraved upon the steel: *‘Love one another.’*”

Michael thought he had a wonderful knife, but his knowledge did not go far enough to spell out the motto.

“This precept comes from God, my child: it is Jesus himself who has written this command in the New Testament. Take your knife, my lad: preserve it with care; but especially remember its motto.”

The glad chimney-sweep received his knife with great respect.

A knife with a motto, and a motto which is the word of God himself! He never thought he should be so happy. He returned with joy to the lodging-place of his master, who was a severe man toward his little chimney-sweeps, and who scolded Michael harshly for staying away so long at the Fair.

The poor boy was sent to bed without his supper, weeping with all his heart upon the heap of straw which served him for a bed. But all at once he remembered his new knife and its beautiful motto.

“Love one another!” he repeated to himself. “It is the good God who speaks so to us: I must

then love this master; if I don't, I shall not obey the word of the good God."

And in this lovely temper our little Michael slept soundly. As soon as he awoke, he set out to go here and there sweeping chimneys, and he sang his merry song above the roof.

He received from a good woman this morning a large piece of bread and two apples, which he cut with his beautiful knife, of which he was very proud.

While eating his apple, he looked at the letters of the motto and talked to himself:

“As for this kind woman, it is not hard to love her, I confess.”

But as he was about to divide his second apple, one of his comrades, older than himself, tempted by the rose-colored fruit, gave his arm a knock, which made him drop it, and the bad boy caught his apple. Michael, enraged, ran after him, telling him to give it back; but the other only laughed at him, and in reply threw the seeds of the apple at him. Michael was so angry that he almost cried, and he used bad words about the meanness of his comrade.

“One day or other I will revenge myself,” he said.

But in a moment he remembered his motto.

"It is too hard for me to keep this motto," he cried out, throwing away this knife far from him.

And he turned his back upon it, as if he hated the sight of it. However, he took good care not to let it lie there: he took it up again, and looked for a long time upon the letters engraved upon the blade.

"Well," he said, suddenly, "I must then love Joseph, since the good God will have it so: I will try then to love him."

When Michael grew too big to go up chimneys, he gave up this

work, and became an errand-boy. As he was intelligent and honest, he always found employment: there was a letter to be carried, or a coach wanted, and other commissions of this kind. He preserved his knife with care, and took so much pains to practise the motto, that every one loved him for his kind and obliging conduct.

One day he saw a boy, who was a shoe-black, and who appeared to be fighting with another, larger and stronger than himself. As Michael did not like to fight, he walked rapidly away, when the young shoe-black called him; and running back, he knew that it was his

old comrade, who had stolen his apple.

“Oh, Michael! do you see this fellow? I gave him yesterday a ten-cent piece in change. To-day, he tells me the ten-cent piece is counterfeit, and demands another. I have only eight cents: can’t you lend me two?”

Michael drew two cents out of his pocket, and the shoe-black held out the ten cents to the stranger, and extended his other hand to receive the counterfeit piece of the evening before; but the adroit rogue turned his back and carried all away. The poor Joseph cried out for help, and Michael, in his

honest indignation, ran after the robber, caught him, and held him by the flap of his coat. But, with a strong blow of his fist, the latter escaped, and the young boy remained upon the spot, stunned by the blow. When he returned to Joseph he found him in real trouble.

“Wicked fellow!” he cried out; “rogue, I’ll pay you for that, some day, I am resolved!”

“No, no; believe me,” said Michael, in a gentle voice, “you must forgive him; because Jesus commands us ‘to love one another.’ ”

“He cannot tell me to love this thief,” replied Joseph, in wrath; “and though you speak so softly, you would hate him, too, if you were in my place.”

“No, indeed! has he not stolen my two cents, and given me a hard blow with his fist on my head? And yet I do not hate him, for the good God positively forbids hatred.”

“One can see that you have had your dinner to-day,” replied Joseph, in a rude voice; “if you were obliged to fast, you would speak after another fashion.”

“What! have you earned no more than these eight cents?”

“I have lost the rest in play with this rascally Anthony ; but he shall return it to me !”

“Poor Joseph ! I really believe you love no one. But you shall have something to eat to-day : wait two minutes, and I will bring you a piece of bread.”

So saying, in a few moments Michael presented to his comrade a half-loaf of bread, which the latter ate greedily.

“You do indeed pay back well,” said he, with a softened manner. “Say, then, do you remember the nice apple I snatched from you once ? It is a long time ago, and you have perhaps forgotten it.”

“I recollect it very well, and I could even tell you the place where it happened.”

“Well! have you no malice?”

“I thought for a moment I would revenge myself. But I forgave you at last, because of the motto upon my knife.”

“What is the writing you have there?” asked the wondering Joseph.

Michael opened his knife and showed him the precept engraved upon the blade. Joseph burst out laughing.

“Oh! is it there you get advice? You are too simple, my poor Michael!”

This tone and such ridicule disturbed Michael. He walked sadly away, asking himself whether he was not a dunce to use his small earnings to oblige a comrade who made fun of him. He thought a long time about it, and decided for a moment that he was very foolish, and that he would not deny himself again for anybody. But upon further reflection, he was satisfied that he had never been so happy and contented as since he had put his motto into practice. It must surely have come from God, since his conscience was so peaceful.

“I will not then be discouraged,”

he said to himself. And he kept his resolution.

As he was going on an errand one day, he passed by a baker's shop, where a crowd was collected that was very noisy. But what struck him most was to see Joseph, with his eyes cast down and a pale face, in the middle of the crowd. Michael was moved, without knowing why, and would like to have stopped a little to inquire what was the matter; but he was told to hurry, and he was going on, when he heard his name called in a tone of distress and entreaty. He turned back, and saw his comrade with his hands tied. He

pressed through the crowd to get information, and to find out what all this meant.

“Pay for me!” cried out Joseph; “pay for me, or I go to prison!”

“To jail!” repeated Michael, drawing back in terror.

“He has stolen a loaf of bread!” they cried out on all sides.

Michael looked on his comrade, as if he could not believe such an accusation.

“I was starving!” sobbed Joseph, in a voice that pained Michael.

“How much do you want, to let him go?” he said to the baker.

“Twenty cents, or I will not let him off.”

“Twenty cents! I have not so much with me, but I give you my word I will pay you early this evening.”

“Now, or to prison; you may not return.”

“Alas! will no one lend me a franc?” cried out the good Michael, wringing his hands in despair.

An old gentleman, a silent spectator of this scene, now came forward.

“I will readily lend it to this good and honest boy,” said he; “I do not doubt his honorable intentions. Take it, my young friend;

and if you wish to return it, here is my address: M. Robert, Rue——."

Michael did not speak but with a grateful look; and he made haste to release Joseph, who said to him, in a trembling voice:

"Ah, Michael! I now see the wisdom of the motto upon your knife: it is this which saves me from prison."

Although the gentleman who had been so ready to lend him money had the appearance of a nobleman, Michael did not think for a moment to omit returning it. The very same evening, he knocked timidly at M. Robert's door and asked if he was at home, and

he was taken at once into the study of the old gentleman.

“Well, my friend, already here!” he said to him, smiling. “How prompt you are! you are as honest as you appear to be, and that is saying a great deal. But you must be doing a good business, to be so soon able to pay this sum,” he added, giving Michael a keen look.

“Oh, no, sir!” replied the young Swiss; “but I earn small sums, and I save as much as I can, in order to return home, some day, and to carry a little money to my mother. It is this which has enabled me to help my comrade.”

“Noble boy! I hope you will be rewarded for your conduct. But tell me the meaning of the words of this unhappy youth, which I overheard, and which surprised me: ‘I now see the wisdom of the motto upon the knife: this has saved me from prison.’”

Michael smiled in a frank manner, and drawing his knife from his pocket, he showed to M. Robert the commandment engraved upon the blade.

“What!” exclaimed the latter warmly, “are you the little sweep whom I helped to buy this?”

“Oh, sir! is it you who was so good?” said Michael, in his turn.

M. Robert took the hand of the brave boy, and pressed it kindly, for he knew from Joseph's words that the motto which he had explained to him, had been put into practice since that day.

Full of interest in his young protégé, M. Robert took pleasure in teaching him to read and write, and put him on the road to an honest fortune.

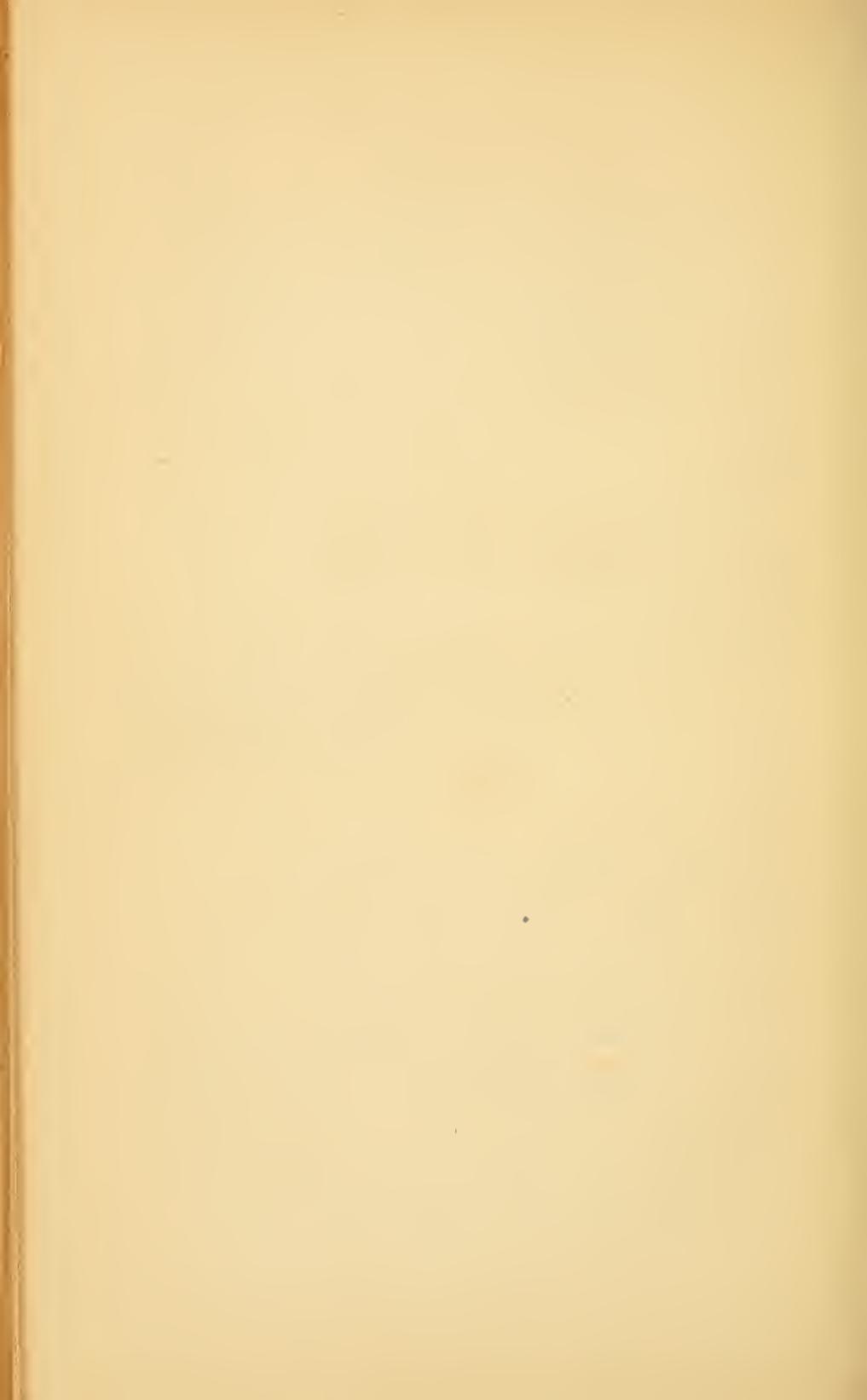
Ten years after these events, Michael, with his sack upon his back, returned to his village, happy in being able to place his mother in ease and comfort, and having a nice little farm to cultivate.

Thus, the little chimney-sweep,

who left his home without a cent in his pocket, returned favored by fortune, rewarded in his honesty and prudence, and with the blessing of the Lord, whom he had obeyed.

To-day he is an old man, the honored father of children and grand-children. He often shows to the little ones an old knife, whose blade still has letters almost effaced by time.

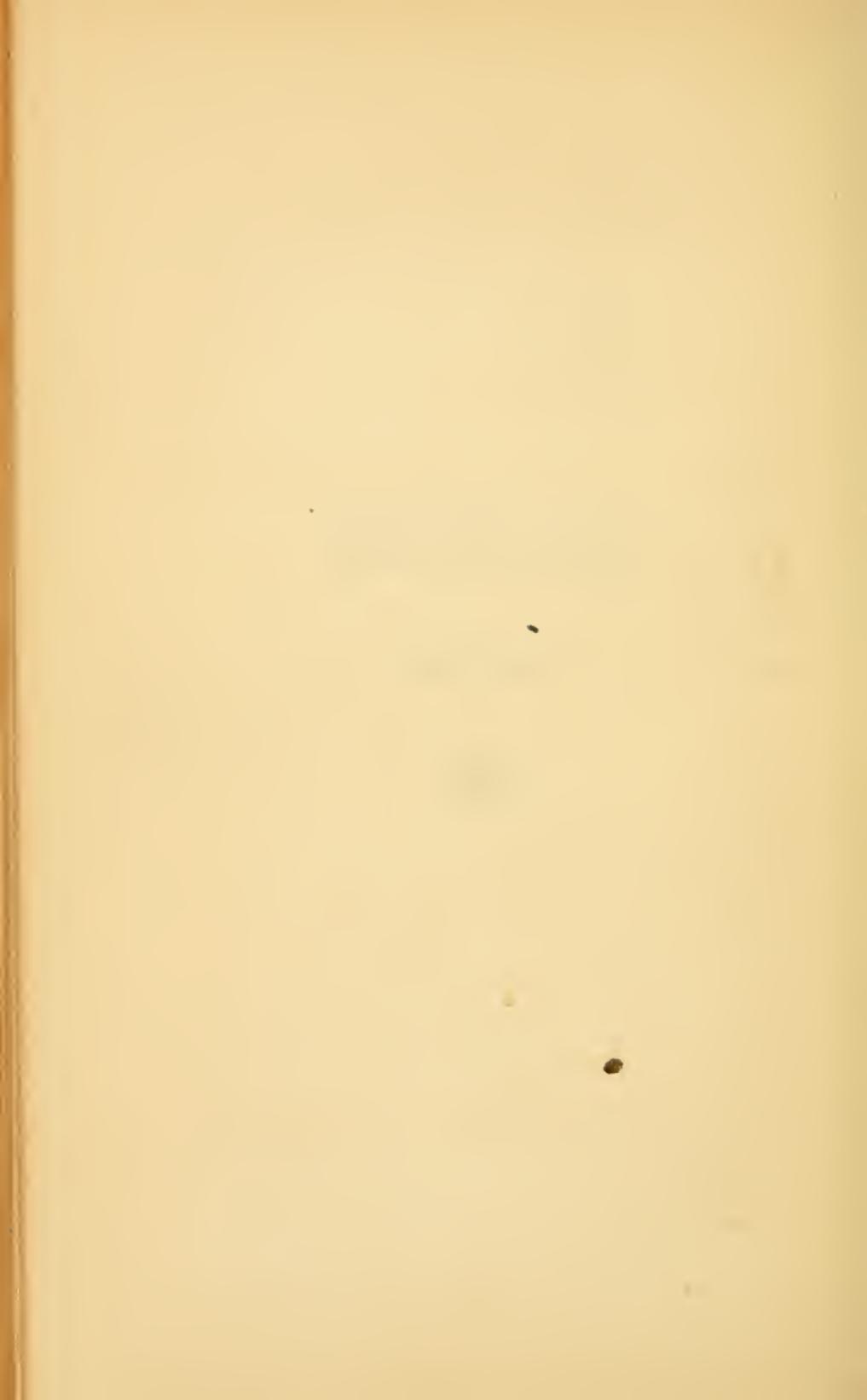
“See here, my children!” he says, “this is the best part of my possessions; for this knife bears a beautiful motto, which ought never to be forgotten: ‘Love one another.’”





FRANCIS.







F R A N C I S.

“Thou shalt not steal.”—DEUTERONOMY v. 19.

F RANCIS was the only son of rich peasants. You ought to see the beautiful farm where they lived! To the east, the windows opened upon a wide porch, where the fruits of autumn were drying. There you could see spread out over the boards, plums and apples, and sweet, yellow pears. Then they prepared them in the oven, and kept them for winter enjoyment.

In summer, you would see a lively, well-kept garden, planted with hundred-leaved roses, pinks, and with beautiful white lilies, and surrounded with cabbages and rows of peas and beans. Then, against the walls you would see beehives, filled with numerous swarms of bees, which visited the meadows in company, to collect their food from the daisy and butter-cup, or clover, which they carried to their hives, and made into delicious honey.

Now, would you not think that Francis ought to be happy — more so than most of the children of the village, who were not so well off,

and whose parents were not so tender and so generous as his?

Well, Francis was not aware of his happiness. So far from this, that he always coveted what did not belong to him, and what in general was not so pretty as what he already had. Did he receive fruit to eat, Louis's pear was twice as big as his, he said. Did they give him a whip, Anthony's whip was longer, and cracked louder than his.

His parents, who were very busy, did not trouble themselves much about his character, and did not notice this disposition, and unhappily it was not corrected, as it ought to have been. As yet, covetousness

had not led poor Francis to theft; but he was in the direct road to it.

One day, as he was walking with his father near a vine, he saw a bunch of grapes hanging over a wall a little above his head.

“Father,” he said, stopping the farmer, “look at that fine bunch! I would like to have it. How nice it is!”

“I will give you some at the house,” replied his father.

“I want *these* grapes, father; we have none so fine.”

“How you talk, little one! there is nothing remarkable about these. Besides, not for the whole world

would I put my hand on what did not belong to me."

Francis, at these words, hung down his head, and tried to think no more of the grapes.

When he returned home, his father gave him a large, rich bunch; but the little boy did not think it was as good as that on the vine, and from this time he wished to get it for himself. He was thinking so much about it in the evening while eating his supper, that his mother spoke to him twice without his reply, so that she spoke to him quite loud:

"Why, my lad! what are you thinking about?"

At this question the little boy blushed deeply, and was quite confused, which ought to have warned him of his sinful thoughts, since he could not avow them, and was ashamed of them. But he did not consider all this: on the contrary, once in bed, he turned and thought over this matter, until he fell asleep. He dreamed that he was near the wall where the grapes hung, and that he was getting them, when a voice said: "Not for all the world would I put my hand on what does not belong to me!" This made him tremble with fear, and prevented his approach.

Then, again, thinking he was alone, he cut the bunch; but on returning, he saw his mother, who was weeping and saying, "My son is a thief!" So that, trembling, he let the grapes fall, and did not succeed even in tasting them.

He awoke in great agitation, and was happy that it was only a dream; and yet—would you believe it?—this did not turn him from his purpose. As the morning sunbeams lighted the chamber in which he slept with his parents, he jumped out of bed, and asked to go down stairs to get a drink. His mother gave permission. Francis opened the window of the

kitchen, got out this way, as the door was locked, and ran barefooted, so as not to make a noise, over to the neighbor's vine. How lovely the morning sun, warming up nature, and how sweet and fresh is nature as she greets the early sun !

The flowers, glistening with dew, reflect the stars; with the birds nestling among the trees, and the sun gilding the hills, the woods, and the meadows, and drinking the morning dews.

But who would believe that the sun, which lights up so many beautiful things, would also shine upon the bad action of a child —

the first theft of a little boy? Oh! is it not true, as Jesus tells us, that our Heavenly Father makes His sun to shine upon the evil and upon the good? .

Francis cautiously approached the vine with the knife in hand, cut the bunch, hid it in his pocket, and returned all trembling with emotion. Why did he tremble and fly so fast? no one was in the road at this hour. Why tremble at the noise of a bird on the wing? The bird would not betray him.

Ah! it is the voice within him which Francis hears, and which accuses him; it is this voice which affrights him, and which he tries to

stifle. How glad he is to find himself again in the kitchen, as if he felt it was a shelter from punishment.

As soon as he was alone, he ate the stolen fruit, which he found delicious, and he quieted his conscience by this reasoning: "What is the value of one bunch, either more or less? Who will miss it?"

Poor Francis had taken the first step, and this too often decides the whole after-life. He had stifled the voice of conscience, and he soon accustomed himself to take what he did not dare to ask for. Was the sugar-bowl within reach, he watched to see if he was alone,

and put a piece in his pocket, saying: "Who will miss this little lump?"

How apt are children to reason thus falsely, when they are tempted to covet, forgetting that, in the sight of God, the theft of a cent is as sinful as the theft of a hundred; and that which hinders them from taking large sums is not so much the fear of God as the dread of discovery!

One day, Francis was perched upon a load of hay, which his father was hauling home in his farm-wagon. While thus seated like a king upon his throne, and calling "Yo! ho!" to the big horses which

drew him, and observing all below him, he saw a young lad, who was running after them. Francis' father asked him where he was going so fast.

“I have forgotten the errand of my mistress,” said the young man — “a letter and a packet; I must hurry on. I put under this pile of hay a basket of choice apricots, which she charged me to sell at the village.”

At these words Francis opened his ears; he sees the pile of hay, and while his father is at the head of the horse, he slides down the wagon to the ground, and discovers the hidden treasure. He is

charmed with the sight of the beautiful fruit; but no time was to be lost; he put the finest into his pocket, and covered up the basket. In doing this, he saw another whose color looked luscious: he took that, having persuaded himself that one more or less was of no account; and then took a third. After which, put the basket under the hay again, and mounted the wagon, and slowly thought over the matter. When they reached home, he helped his father to put up the horses, longing to get a bite at his beautiful apricots. He escaped as soon as he could, and hid himself in the

cart-house, behind a pile of boards, and bit into his fruit. What juice! what flavor! Francis is delighted at having his share, as he called it; for indeed, he repeated to himself, “it is such a little thing, three apricots, that it will never be missed, or found out.”

The next day, as he was returning over the meadow with his father, with the fork on his shoulder to toss the hay, they met the young peasant of the evening before, whom the farmer again stopped, and asked if he had made a good bargain.

“A sad affair, Father Thomas,” replied the lad. “My mistress

had put into the basket, before my eyes, twenty-five apricots. I sold them at the first hotel of the village, at three cents apiece, as she had directed me. But when I began to count them I found I had only twenty-two. I counted them over and over again, but there was not one more. What is to become of me?

“The mistress was deaf to my words, and asked me:

“‘Well, Peter! had you twenty-five, or twenty-two?’

“‘Twenty-five,’ I replied; ‘so it seemed to me, at least: but I give you my word that I sold but

twenty-two, and here is all the money I received.'

"'Pshaw!' she replied, in anger; 'you can't make me believe that, Peter: you have kept back nine cents, and you may as well confess it.'

"Can you feel for me, Father Thomas, to be treated as a thief, who never in my whole life have taken even a pin? I became so indignant that I knew not what I said, and my reply was rude, I own. Upon which she sent me off, without listening to my defence and apology. And for three apricots, Father Thomas, I am shut out into the street, without a

place or character; for the woman did not fail to call me a thief, in a loud voice."

With these words the voice of poor Peter ceased, and he quickly left Francis and his father, to hide his grief.

Francis was in silent dread: the name of thief, which caused the misery of Peter, this odious term, he deserved. Was this, then, one of those things which he considered of no importance — the loss of nine cents? Could he in truth say he had never stolen money? How could he see Peter without a place? — Peter, who worked to sup-

port his old mother, who would suffer hunger — and he had caused all this trouble. He could not bear this thought. The apricots of the evening before lay like lead upon his heart. He wept in silence — he could not eat: his parents thought he was sick. For a moment he resolved to confess all. He ran toward his mother, but his courage failed him when he tried to say, "I am a thief!"

"Oh! why did I not consider?" he said to himself, bitterly; "why did I not reflect before deserving such a name? What will become of me? How wretched I am!"

The unfortunate Francis knew

now what it was to weep in secret; for the image of Peter reduced to want never left him, and this sad effect of his sin made him feel serious.

“Why did I take the grapes which hung over the wall? Why? If I had driven away this thought, I should never have been tempted to touch the apricots.”

He informed himself as often as he dared about Peter, and what had become of him, and heard eagerly all that they said of him. One evening, his father, after smoking his pipe, said, in a pitying tone:

“This poor Peter—he is going

to leave the country, although his mother has none but him in the world. He cannot get a place here. The new proprietor of the hotel would have employed him ; but a note from his old mistress prevented him. They wanted a boy of good character, and they refused Peter. It is painful to see the distress of his mother."

Father Thomas went out on saying these words, as if this subject was too painful to him ; and his wife, who had a warm heart, exclaimed :

"The poor mother! I must pray for her."

Francis could bear no more: he fell at her feet sobbing.

“What have you done, little one? What has happened to my Francis?” asked his astonished mother.

“Mother, mother, scold me!—punish me! I am the thief! I am the thief!”

“What is this you tell me? Francis, you are losing your mind. What are you saying?”

“I ate the apricots that Peter missed! I, and not he, ate the apricots! I was the thief.”

Francis wept floods of tears, and his mother looked at him in consternation. Then, lifting him up by force, she held him at a dis-

tance before her, and asked, in a grave voice :

“ Is it true that you stole the apricots from Peter’s basket ? ”

The little boy made a sign that he did, and his poor mother raised her hands to heaven. Then, with great effort, she replied :

“ Are you, then, unhappy child, in the habit of stealing ? Have you stolen other things ? ”

Francis was silent under this appeal ; but she felt that it was true, and she cried out, with tears streaming from her eyes :

“ Wretched child ! Alas, alas ! I have a thief for a son ! ”

This was what Francis dreamed.

He would never have believed that such a dream could be real, and yet he now suffered much more than he had suffered in his dream.

“I confess my fault, mother; I will never steal again: you may trust me; only I beg you not to tell any one: I am so ashamed!”

Now, that the theft of Peter’s apricots was confessed, it was necessary to repair the wrong by clearing up his reputation.

“Leave me for the present: I will go and tell his mother. Ah, *she* must now pray for *me*!”

The fatal effects of Francis’ fault very naturally made a strong im-

pression upon him, and he rejoiced with all his heart to see Peter justified, and happy in the house of his new master; but he was very unhappy to see his mother so sad and so distrustful of him.

“Mother, mother! I have been so severely punished, will you not forgive me?” he said to her one day, weeping.

“My child, I must be satisfied that you are truly penitent and corrected, or I shall always fear lest you fall again into temptation.”

“But, dear mother, if I pray to Jesus every day, and if you also ask Him to keep me from my be-

setting sin, do you not believe that He will preserve me?"

Francis' voice was so penitent, his manner so sorrowful, and there was apparently so strong a resolution to do better in the future shadowed on his countenance, that the good mother saw that her little son was really in earnest, and she hastened to embrace him.

From this time Francis tried to conquer his besetting sin. He learned to be content with what he had, and not to desire the goods of others.

When the temptation became too strong, and when some luscious fruit or anything else looked

too inviting, he fled the sight of them, resolved never again to forget the commandment of the Lord :

“*T*hou shalt not *S*teal.”

END OF VOL. II.



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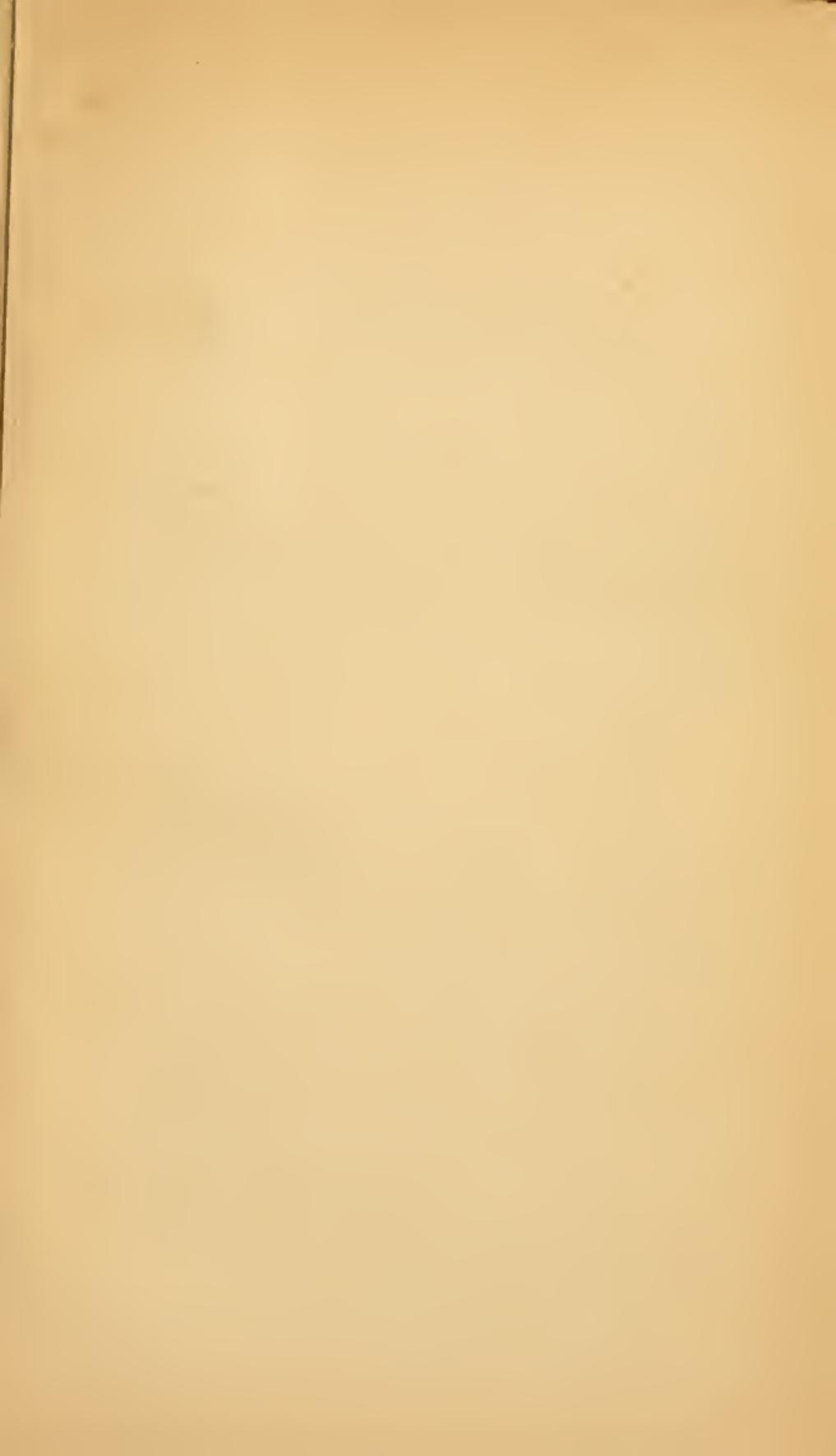
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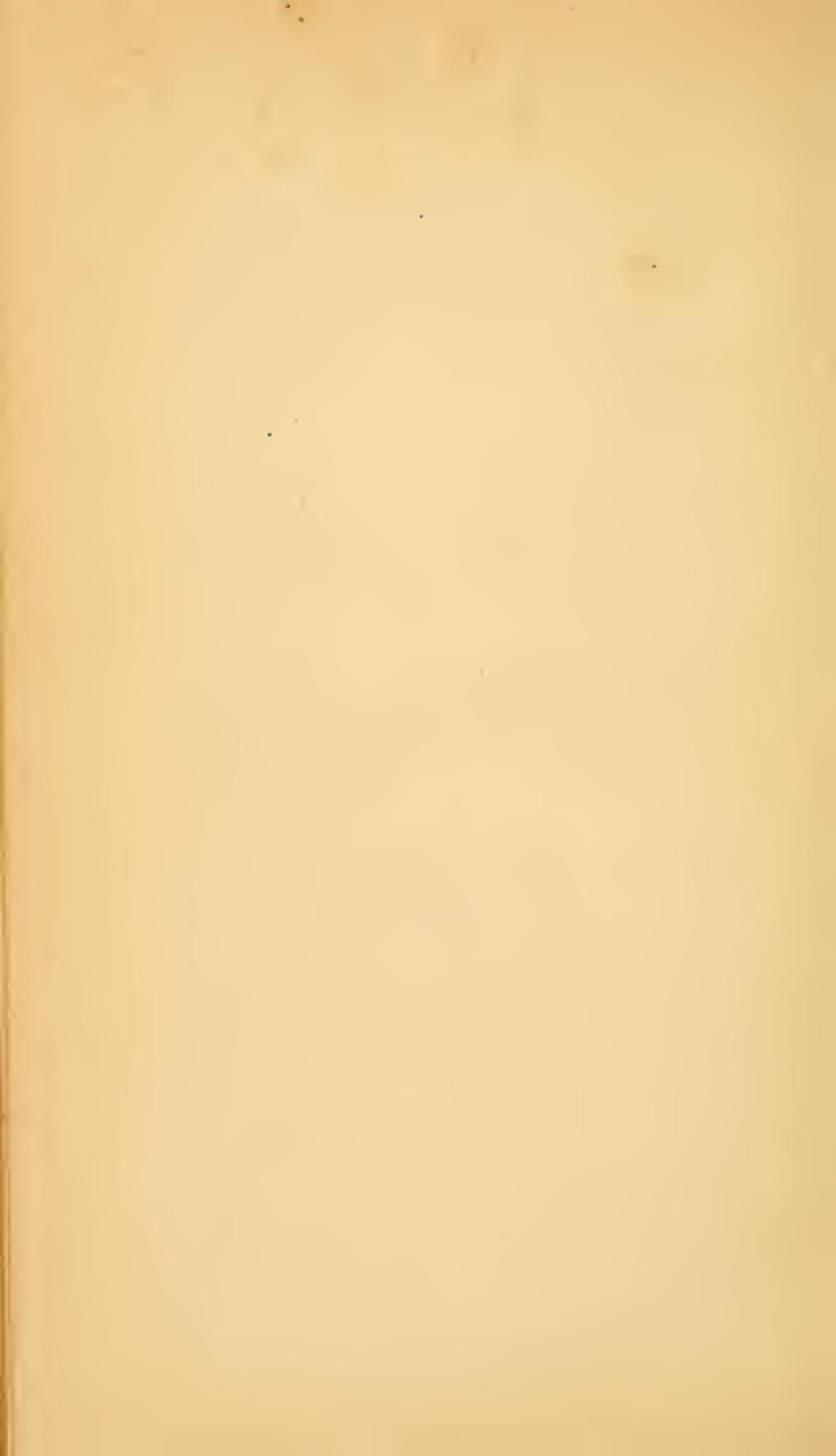
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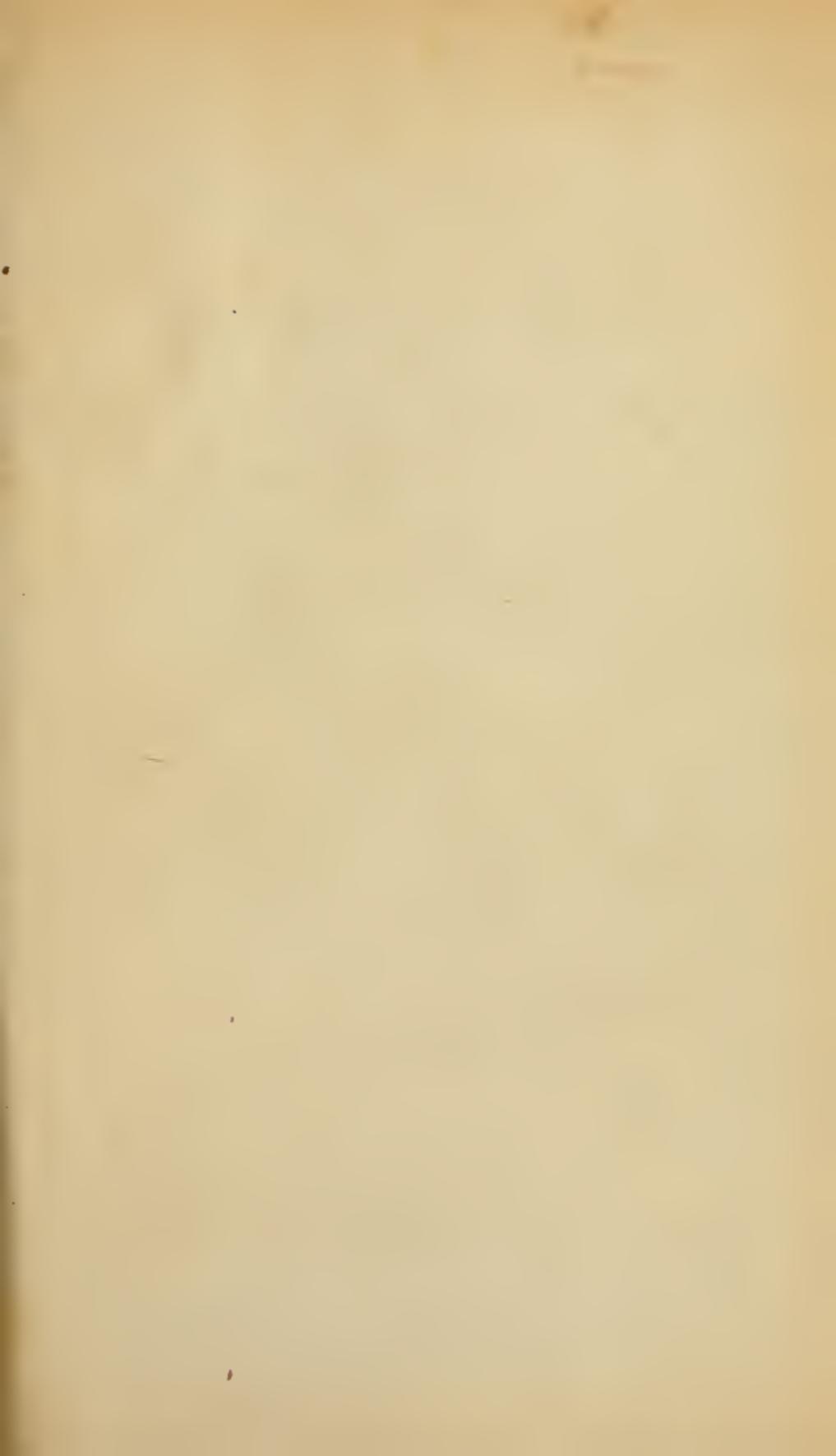
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